CA Press Guidance
February 1, 1979

(2052)

DISPOSITION OF BODIES OF JONESTOWN VICTIMS REMAINING AT DOVER, DELAWARE

Q: Does the State Department have a plan for disposition of the unclaimed and unidentified bodies still at Dover AFB?

A: The Interagency Group on Guyana has agreed on procedures for disposing of the unclaimed and unidentified bodies of the Jonestown victims. However, on January 23 the California Superior Court in San Francisco granted the Interfaith Emergency Relief Committee 30 days to come up with a plan for transportation and interment of the bodies. In light of the California Court's decision, it would be improper for the USG to take any further actions with regard to the bodies until the court has issued its ruling on the Emergency Relief Committee's plan.

Q: What is the Emergency Relief Committee?

A: The Emergency Relief Committee is composed of the San Francisco chapter of the Council of Churches, The Rabbis Association of San Francisco and the Bishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco. It was apparently formed to assist in the disposal of the Jonestown bodies.

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Q: Will the Department cooperate with this Emergency Relief Committee?

A: If approached, the Department plans to cooperate fully with the Emergency Relief Committee.

Q: What will happen if the California Court disapproves of the Committee's plan?

A: The Department will then be in a position to execute the Interagency Group's plan for disposition.

Q: What is the Interagency Group's plan?

A: We are not going to release the details of that plan until we are in a position to implement it.

Q: Have state officials in Delaware been apprised of this decision?

A: Officials here in the Department have informed Delaware state and Congressional representatives of this decision.

Q: What are the latest figures on identification, etc.?

A: As of COB January 31, 1979, 641 of the 913 bodies have been identified: 325 bodies have been released to the next-of-kin or interested parties; 316 bodies have been identified but not released. Of the unidentified bodies, approximately 210 are those of children. The Department has sought the assistance of California state officials in obtaining dental charts, footprints, etc., to assist in the identification of these children.

Q: Have you notified next-of-kin of all those bodies positively identified?

A: We have been unable to notify or locate next-of-kin for 26 of the 641 identified bodies.

Q: Have any next-of-kin refused to claim a body or bodies?

A: The next-of-kin of some 69 victims have indicated that they cannot or will not claim the bodies.

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